1: Fitzgerald 41-5 (1937-1938) AE3 Sino-Tibetan
Border Peoples AE3

(3) MAGIC AND MYTH

Chinese folklore the shape shifter is always a fox, not a tiger, and it is a fox who can assume human shape, not a human who assumes the shape of a fox. This Min Chia story, however, was positive that the shapeshifter became a tiger, and everyone denied ever hearing of a case of shape-shifting before.

Other stories connected with the lake might perhaps be explained if it could be proved that in certain lights mirage effects were possible, but I never observed any such effects nor heard of others who had done so. It is said that "several" years ago a phantom ship was observed from the western shore, apparently leaving Wa Shih, across the lake, about four miles distant. This ship was much larger than any seen on the lake, and—a modern touch—had a deck house with glass windows. No such ship exists on the Erh Hai lake. Halfway across it suddenly vanished. Another phantom apparition on the lake was seen eight years ago (1931). A large and well-attended market was seen from the western shore, apparently taking place on the still waters of the lake, far out from the shore. Hundreds of people going and coming could be seen, with horses and mules. After being clearly visible for some minutes it suddenly vanished. This did not happen on a day when market was being held in Ta Li. As there are several market villages scattered round the shore of the lake the possibility of a vivid mirage cannot be ruled out. The Min Chia know nothing of mirages and considered these phantoms to be supernatural manifestations of unknown import.

Other happenings confirm the fact that the myth making faculty still functions actively among the Min Chia peasantry. A short while after the war with Japan had begun a miracle was reported from a temple near Hsia Kuan, at the lower end of the lake. This temple, on the mountain slope above Hsia Kuan, is dedicated to the Chinese general Li Ming who with

3:Torrance E-4 (no date)1933 AE3 Sino-Tibetan Border Peoples AE3

778 822 The use of a sacred White Stone is a leading feature of Chiang worship. It is set up both in the groves and on the roofs of their houses. In the grove it stands above the altar of sacrifice; on the roof it is placed ever the middle of the battlement above the back wall. The Deity is not supposed to reside therein and it is not, therefore, worshipped. The Stone is sacred, in the first place, because of its whiteness. Whiteness betokens goodness in contrast to blackness, which betokens evil. Its colour thus symbolises the holiness of God who hates evil and loves good. It is sacred, secondly, because it reminds men that he is the natural Rock or Mount of their strength. That God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that he is the Rock Source of all good and blessing, constitute the twin fundamental tenets of their belief.

778 The Stone requires to be conical or mount-like in shape and set up as found in its natural or unchissled state. Occasionally small white stones are placed around its base but these have no religious meaning. The significance of the Stone itself is the continual intimation it makes that God may only be approached by the way of holiness, and is only found when men respond to this demand of his character. As a monument on the house top it bears an unambiguous witness that those who dwell under it are a people who recognise the God of Heaven as their God, and are willing to serve him according to the immemorial customs of their fathers.

776 It will be seen from this that the religion of the Chiang is not one of stone-worship. To speak of it as such is to talk at random and gives a misleading impression. Some who want to believe that it is, because the affirmation sounds sensational, are the worst offenders. They prate about the White Stone worship but they have nothing to support the assertion except ignorant hear-say, or wilful misrepresentation. The Chiang are not animists. They know whom they worship and they do not worship him ignorantly. This requires to be said because already it has been stated far and wide that the Chiang worship the White Stone. A foreign journal once announced that the tribes people worshipped a white stone. The news was sensational; that was the effect desired. Truth, therefore, went by the board. Now, litholatry is a big word. It has a scientific or learned sound. The mere use of it is supposed to be ample proof that the Chiang are litholatrists, and the proving of this is necessary to be able to say they are animists—another big word. The Israelites had two sacred stones in their Holy of holies. Were they litholatrists? They lifted up their eyes unto the hills from whence came their help. Did they worship the hills? Did they not expressly state at the same time that their help came from Jehovah who made the Heaven and the earth? Let us be as just to the Chiang as we are to the Israelites.

It is useless to say that one was told by the Chinese that the Chiang worshipped the White Stone. The Chiang themselves deny

2: Rock K-5 (1934-) 1947 AF16 Southwest China
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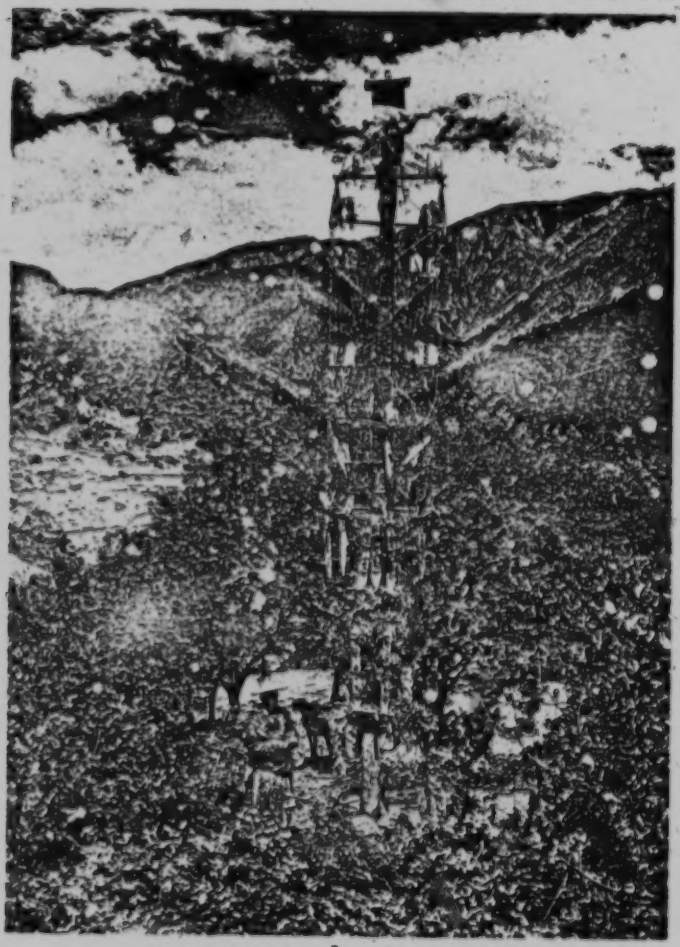

(Courtesy Nat. Geogr. Soc.)

PLATE 223. — A HA-PA CONTRAPTION TO PREVENT HAILSTORMS

本 事 者 巴 勝 波 旦 建 置 各 處 圖

This structure is called Nya-ta and is erected once every three or four years by the ancient sect of sorcerers called Ha-pa who have survived in Yung-ning and in Mu-li. The Nya-ta is built of wood and is surrounded with a network of string known as Na-k'wai by the Na-khi Dto-mbas. It is erected in the first moon, first in a valley, and in the second moon is moved to a hillside where it is left until a new one is needed.

[p. 410-0]